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Marián Réthei Prikkel	Polk dancing
Géza Róheim	Primitive religion
Gyula Sebestyén	Collection of folklore
Sándor Solymossy	Primitive religion
Károly Tagányi	Legal customs
Béla Vikár	Polk poetry
Károly Viski István Györffy László Madarassy Zsigmond Szendrey	Co-authors, among others, of the monumental Ethnography of the Magyars

The Hungarian universities have shown surprisingly little interest in ethnography and folklore. In 1929 departments for the study of these subjects were first organized in Budapest and in Szeged, but the latter ceased to function in 1934.

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Folklore had more support from the public and the government. From 1931 to 1944 a government-sponsored organization called Gyöngyösbokréta 'Pearly Bouquet,' with Béla Paulini as its first director, existed, the aims of which were the organization of folklore groups made up of young peasants who would perform in the cities, especially during the tourist

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658 season, and the promotion of peasant crafts. The Hungarians of the cities and the foreign visitors indeed enjoyed these colorful performances but the Gyöngyösbokréta failed, nonetheless, because of the resistance of peasants who resented the badly organized and loud publicity which plagued the Gyöngyösbokréta.

[815] The present Hungarian regime gives remarkable support to folklore research. A present-day counterpart of the Gyöngyösbokréta was formed under the name of Állami Népi Népi Ének-és Táncegyüttes and it performed on a widely acclaimed tour of Western Europe in early 1955.

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HUNGARIAN PAGEANT

THE TRADITION OF THE PEARLY BOUQUET

Beginning in 1931, a few years ago the Pearly Bou- 545
quet was meant to be only an extra diversion among so 186
many, a graceful surprise to the visitors to Budapest on St. Stephen's Day, day of King Stephen, founder and Patron Saint of Hungary. It was conceived to be a flashing sample of Hungarian folk-art and folk-lore for the passing visitor too hurried to go beyond the walls of the Hungarian capital, not knowing that the "different," the fascination of the "unusual," the eternal quest and ultimate pleasure of world-travellers tuned to the velvety speed of international Pullmans, lay there waiting in the whitewashed quaintness of tiny Hungarian villages hidden amidst the undulating waves of whispering wheat hardly a stone's throw beyond the city gates.

It was a venture born perhaps in a moment's happy fancy, or in response to an untold necessity, which brought to Budapest a handful of robust peasant folk: healthy and handsome Hungarian youths and shyly smiling Hungarian maidens, accompanied by a careworn village teacher, who came one evening to sing and dance in the City Theatre before a few hundred sophisticated foreigners and about as many of the inhabitants of Budapest.

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The sparkle of the genuine, the charm of this untrained little group's simple sincerity, and the bewildering variety of colour, movement, and melody captivated this at first so indifferent audience. The echo of their success found the response of the Press, and their nascent fame overflowed the City Theatre and the city itself, to become overnight the beginning of a nation-wide movement and an international success that knew no boundaries.

The small number of pioneering villages was followed by many hundreds; the few little dances and acts of the beginnings have grown into thousands, and the quaint name of the first performance, "Pearly Bouquet," became the designation of a national endeavour, the "trade-mark" of an internationally famed artistic achievement.

Today the Pearly Bouquet has a chapter, a working organization, in nearly every Hungarian village, and the number of remembered folk-songs, retold little dramas, reborn dances, and revived customs is almost countless, as is the wealth of recollected folk-costumes.

Millions of Hungarians and many hundred thousand foreign visitors have admired and applauded the Pearly Bouquet in Hungary and during its appearances at the international folk-festivals in London, Hamburg, Cannes, Nice, and Vienna, to mention only a few of the major stations in the unbroken line of conquering, irresistible success.

The Pearly Bouquet could best be defined as the self-expression of the Hungarian soul in its full holiday splendour; the translation into terms of dancing, singing, picturesque customs, and colourful costumes of the festive spirit of the Hungarian people. It is a representative collection of the most characteristic Hungarian dances, of the most beautiful and most typical Hungarian

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545 songs, a variety of miniature peasant dramas, and a selec-
186 tion of the quaint ancestral customs of the Hungarians, enacted on national holidays in a natural setting by the prettiest girls and the handsomest men of a strikingly beautiful race, famed for its spirit, its gaiety, its vivid imagination, its temperamental ways, its love of music, and the unequalled splendour of its gorgeous folk-costumes.

The Pearly Bouquet is also a nation-wide organization, a co-operative society for the revival and preservation of Hungarian folk-lore in all its forms: of the picturesque folk-costumes, of the native dances and songs, and of the various native customs connected with practically every event of some importance in the life of the Hungarian peasant — wedding-celebrations, harvest and vintage festivals, and the multitude of holiday celebrations at Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas, which even in our days are observed with striking vividness and in a bewildering variety all over the country.

It would be, however, the gravest mistake to think that the Pearly Bouquet Society is nothing but a conventional folk-lore society addicted to the routine work of collecting data about folk-lore for the preservation of national characteristics and the like. It is, rather, a spontaneous natural phenomenon, one of the most truly remarkable ones of modern times, in which the country-folk and their leaders, the village priest, the village teacher, and the notary enthusiastically co-operate in bringing back to full life, to complete revival, the natural self-expression of the Hungarian people which has been endangered and sometimes impaired by the encroaching material civilization.

In fact the Pearly Bouquet has become an essential part of Hungarian national existence, an important com-

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545 ponent of Hungarian national life, answering in its func-
186 tions a deep-rooted national necessity: the urge for the free, and at the same time solemn, self-expression of the folk-spirit itself. There is nothing factitious about this. It is life itself, or rather an angle, one of the most essential angles of real life in which the Hungarian folk-character reflects itself in the light of its aspiration for the Beautiful, for the Eternal, and for the Sublime. No one who has witnessed the Pearly Bouquet could have failed to feel, to realize, that it is an expression surging from the unsoundable depths of the ages and of the national soul of which the individual is hardly more than an unconscious carrier.

The Pearly Bouquet is the crystallization of these aspirations, showing in retrospect the condensed and idealized memories of a thousand years of tribal existence on the Steppes of the East, and of another millennium integrated into the West, lived on the Hungarian lowlands, on the limits of the Orient and spent in the defence of the Occident, by the Hungarians in an always dualistic, hyphenated existence. Thus the Pearly Bouquet constitutes the most convincing proof to the effect that popular national art, meaning the ultimate development in the primitive art of the people of a nation, can have its roots only in the ancestral traditions and flourish only on the national soil.

186 The Pearly Bouquet also shows the wonderful elasticity of a nation which alone of so many was able to get a firm foothold on the cross-roads of the people's eternal migration, and which alone of so many was able to keep its stand for a thousand years in the face of ceaseless onslaughts from the East and against the assimilating tendencies of the West. The Hungarian people could accomplish this feat only by being, in a sense, the most

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186 The whole movement turned out to be a successful move against the enveloping tide of grey uniformity; a peaceful fight fought with the blessed weapons of idealism in which the pendulum of time miraculously swung back in progressive cultural traditionalism.

186 For the true understanding of the Pearly Bouquet 545 it is sufficient to see any one of its performances, any single flower of the Pearly Bouquet, its petals humid with the crystal-dew of country morns, to listen to the performers' speech and to hear their songs alive with the vibrating soul of the medieval forest.

The scene unfolds before the spectator like an eclosion. To the rhythmic throbs of their heavy shepherd canes the minstrels tell their vivid tales, in captivating freshness we see the sequence of miniature dramas in the charming simplicity of which the soul of the peasant life declares itself in details full of meaning and sincerity: the quaint rituals of the bride-wooing and of peasant weddings, the celebration of the harvest, symbolic thanksgiving among the waves of golden wheat, and the vintage festivals with the golden flow of the new wine on the volcanic slopes of Tokay. Then to the passionate strains of Hungarian gypsy music we see the mystic midsummer-night's dance of the maidens round St. Ivan's fire, then the whirling Hungarian dances in all their exquisite variety, first slow, and stately, then quick and frenzied, to be followed by the undulating double step and the gaiety of the dipping and the skipping dance.

From the reverberating cymbalom, a tightly-wired square table, the gypsy brings out the contagious melancholy and the irresistible, wild gaiety of Hungarian folk-songs with his soft padded hammers moving with the speed of lightning. The clear ringing tárogató fills the air with the atmosphere of camp fires surrounded

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by tired warriors with their dreamy longing for their girls and their families. Then the caressing sweet melodies of the violins spread their enchantment or stir the revolving dancers to rapturous hilarity, interrupted suddenly by the thrilling solo dances of the men, amazing in the robust vigour, the proud dignity, and the graceful ease of their performance. They are followed by the coquettish cushion and bottle dances of the girls, the mischievous circling of the cap dance, a multitude of recruiting dances, and by the strenuous exercise of the hook dance of the herdsmen.

The setting is changing all the time, and where we have just witnessed the revels of the cowboys we now enjoy the frolics of the spinnery enveloped with magic and the cheerful fantasy of bright-coloured folk-attire.

Every performance of the Pearly Bouquet, whether the national reunion on St. Stephen's Day or the modest celebration of a minor local chapter, is a national festival, the most distinctive of all Hungarian festivals. It is a celebration always colourful, artistic, and festive, but never tedious, exaggerated, or artificial; for while it glorifies in the simple ways of peasant folk the most beautiful, the most spiritual, the very best in Hungarian folk-art, it never pretends to be more than symbolic testimony to the fact that Hungarian Sundays do exist and have their distinctive atmosphere, just as toilsome Hungarian weekdays have their own. It recognizes and affirms that ideals, dreams, and aspirations have a real existence with all their consequences just as material realities have. The Pearly Bouquet is the festive, solemn expression of this thought, and not a fight against modernity or against the achievements of technocracy. The Hungarian peasant of today will be only too glad to use

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186 the steel plough drawn by the tractor and fill the furrow
545 with synthetic fertilizers to make the earth pay richer returns on his sweat and labour, but he does not tolerate the coercion of the machine age, and wishes to know that his soul is free of the iron harness of uniformity.

The Pearly Bouquet is the focal point at which the expression of this thought appears in its convincing fulness, an image in which the humble realities of Hungarian peasant life are transposed to the sphere of absolute art.

Around seven o'clock Jozsef Magyar leaves. At the National Theatre they are playing Shakespeare's Hamlet; he has bought himself a ticket and now he must hurry so as to be on time. The National Theater is one of the largest theaters in the capital. Performances of contemporary, as well as classic plays have evoked so much interest in the theater among the people that there is rarely a performance that is not sold out. The fact, too, that the tickets are very inexpensive also contributes to the popularity of the entertainment medium.

The Gergely family sits down to dinner. They too have plans for the evening: they and the children are going on a two-hour trip on the musical promenade-ship on the Danube . . .

After dinner they pick themselves up and walk out to

Scene from a performance of "Hamlet" at the National Theater in Budapest.